

SENATOR WESELY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, members. Senator Coordsen, I think, did a good job of summarizing some of the issues involved with LB 182, which he and I were involved with quite a bit just a couple of years ago. There was quite a conflict between the judicial system and the Department of Social Services, at that time, over control of the decision-making process dealing with some of these cases. Ultimately, we reached a compromise between the judicial branch and the Legislature and the department which was negotiated by Senator Coordsen and myself on the issue. We did include funding for financing the dispute resolution envisioned by LB 182 and, as Senator Coordsen said, I, too, recall the fiscal note of 20 million or whatever the amount, I don't recall, but I do recall quite a substantial amount of money. It's called sandbagging, Senator Coordsen, and even though I was on the other side, I have to admit it was quite a bit more sand than probably necessary on that particular issue, but nevertheless, we finally were able to work through that problem and I think the result has been quite beneficial to both the executive branch represented by the department, the judicial branch represented by the courts, the legislative branch represented by this body. What has happened is, obviously the money has not necessarily gone to what originally may have been envisioned by the bill. Thank goodness we haven't had near the number of appeals that we anticipated from that bill. Some of the dispute and conflict has resolved itself prior to that step being taken, but the money is going into additional CPS workers and as well as additional attorney. There always has to be an additional attorney expenditures it seems like anytime you have any conflict and we've got to make sure they keep employed and employed to the lifestyle that they've been accustomed, but nevertheless, the part of the funding that I want to defend is the, as I...and I'm trying to find it here real quickly, but I do believe some of the money went into CPS staff as part of the bill, and as you know, I've worked long and hard to try to get additional CPS workers. I guess this bill preceded some of the initiative this Legislature took in this area. We were way understaffed and as a result having tremendous problems dealing with child protective custody cases and that not only affected the court relationship, but the department, but it affected any number of areas about lack of investigation and you've seen the Flannery articles about lack of investigation of child abuse and so I guess what I'm suggesting is a compromise I know that will be offered by Senator Coordsen makes sense, cutting the budget I